

SOUTH HAMPSHIRE HUMANISTS NEWSLETTER 150

JANUARY/ FEBRUARY 2020



SHH A PARTNER OF HUK

WHAT'S COMING UP

THE APPEAL TO HUMANITY

TALK BY LORD RAYMOND PLANT, BARON OF HIGHFIELD

JANUARY 19TH, 2PM, PAVILION, RESIDENTS' GARDENS, ABBOTTS WAY, SO17 1QU

Lord Plant has been a Labour Life Peer since 1992. He is a distinguished academic, Emeritus Professor of Jurisprudence and Political Philosophy at Kings College London, and of Divinity at Gresham College. He was formally Master of St Catherine's College Oxford and Professor of European Political Thought in Southampton. His academic interests focus on political, social and legal philosophy, and he is probably best known for his work on conceptual issues to do with welfare, particularly ideas such as needs, rights, obligations and community. He has published and lectured widely on the role of religion in the context of the modern state, society and economy.

In his talk to SHH he will look at how the current political scene, nationally and internationally, stresses identity of and differences between politicians, rather than seeking common values which might provide a more unifying set of principles. Is an appeal to common values, and a sense of the common good, a feasible approach to the divisiveness often caused by identity politics?



A REAL TREAT. PLEASE COME AND BRING YOUR FRIENDS.

CLIMATE CHANGE- ARE WE POWERLESS TO STOP IT? IF NOT, WHAT ARE OUR RESPONSIBILITIES TO HELP PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT?

DISCUSSION GROUP, THURSDAY, JANUARY 30TH, 7.30 PM, BREWHOUSE AND KITCHEN, PUB, 47 HIGHFIELD LANE S017 1QD



Too old to sit on the pavement? From such a small beginning look what has developed. There must be things



WE COULD DO!

DARWIN DAY 2020

Proposed that we join Dorset Humanists at Bournemouth university on February 8th, for drink (midday), 2 course finger lunch, and talk by comedian **Robin Ince** (presenter Infinite Monkey Cage with Prof Brian Cox). Cost £20.

Interested? Please contact liz.mizon@btinternet.com. When we know numbers shared transport can be arranged.

Ann Brookes, who died in October, was a founder member of South Hampshire Humanists, a committee member for some years, and took part enthusiastically in all our activities - meetings, discussions, debates and outings. She was a great and knowledgeable lover of the countryside and led many good walks for our group and for Southampton U3A.

Ann was a speech therapist and a strong, independent woman. She was a member of the National Secular Society as well as Humanist UK and held firm views about religion and humanism, which she was never afraid to express vigorously.

She is sadly missed by her partner, Gordon, her family and many friends.

Anne Bothwell

RECENT EVENTS

POLITICAL HUSTINGS NOV 17TH

Prof. Flemming had to withdraw at the last minute so, SHH took advantage of political events and Liz Mizon managed to get the 5 main political candidates--- Labour, Conservative, LibDem, Green and Brexit--- for Southampton Test, assembled in the Pavilion of the Residents' Gardens. They each gave us a short introductory speech and then answered questions from the audience. Various topics were covered but surprisingly nothing about Brexit! There was (sadly?) no challenging heckling, we were all behaving in a very civilised manner whatever we were actually thinking. However, it was a useful, and quite revealing couple of hours. There was a good turn out and hopefully it showed the candidates that the older demographic is still involved and cerebrating.



AS PEOPLES CONTINUE TO MOVE TO SURVIVE, WHAT SHOULD THE RESPONSE OF THE WEST BE? DISCUSSION GROUP NOV 27TH

Norman Maclean started the discussion by describing two misconceptions about migration. One was that migrants were a cost to Britain whereas they are a benefit, as migrants tend to do useful jobs and pay taxes. The second misconception was that the UK was the most favoured country by migrants but we are well down the list in terms of numbers arriving here, compared with others such as Germany. The picture gets less clear if population density is considered. EU migrants generally come for work, non- EU migrants for family, and asylum seekers come to escape from war and persecution.

The consensus from the discussants was that we have a moral and legal obligation to accept asylum seekers and we must take our fair share of other migrants, as long as they are prepared to obey the law and pay their taxes. The argument was put that it is only a minority who want to emigrate and often they are the ones with energy and drive. Migrations of peoples around the world is a fact of life and here in Britain we have absorbed many. We were though concerned by the possible increase in migration due to climate change. Here our solutions were not new; help improve the life chances of people in other counties and educate women in order that the birth rate decreases. Large migrations that may occur because of climate change would lead to conflict between the humanitarians and those wanting to protect their way of life. It will be a challenge for humanity. Liz Mizon

YULETIDE PARTY

A very good turn out and a very good time was had by all, greatly helped by a wonderful photographic quiz produced by Anne and David Bothwell.

BOOK GROUP

The Book group has had three good meetings. At the last we considered "East West Street" by Phillippe Sands, which traces the development of the concepts of crimes against humanity and genocide in a fascinating way, linked to Sands personal family history, the holocaust and the lives of the two Jewish lawyers who generated these ideas, which we now take for granted but which did not exist until the 1940s. Interestingly Sands will be prosecuting Myanmar in the current case at the Hague where they stand accused of genocide against the Rohingya.

The next meeting is on Jan 27th at the Rolles, 19 Blenheim Ave, SO171DW, 7.0pm, reading "On Liberty" by Shami Chakrabarty. If you would like to join us please contact Toni on tonirolles@yahoo.com

TIM ROBERTS IS CHALLENGING US TO THINK AGAIN.IT WOULD BE GREAT TO HAVE SOME OF YOUR RESPONSES

Can Humanism learn from the High Street?

Every day a new story of defunct business. This year, 2019, has been notable for the demise of Patisserie Valerie, Debenhams, Staples, Oddbins, The BathStore, Thomas Cook. Why is this? Surely we are still sitting in cafe's, buying clothes, using office equipment, drinking wine, taking baths and holidays? And now MotherCare & Mamas&Papas. Surely we are still needing to clothe our babies? The common factor seems to be complacency, aka *'failing to adapt to a changing world.'*

Our modern world is full of contradictions: - instant v fake news; fads v allergies; consumerism v environmental concerns; pussy-grabbing v #me-too; social breakdown v social media. And the various new freedoms and the various new cruel

repressions. No wonder the high street is confused – we all are!

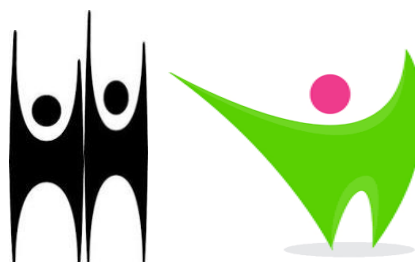
And humanism? Which sprang miraculously into vigorous life in the very darkest of dark ages, ignited by a very brave and clear- thinking man named Francesco Petrarch. Arguably he ignited great change, probably even the Renaissance itself. Which led to the enlightenment, liberalism, and freedoms we have enjoyed ever since. But now, like the high street, Petrarch's humanism is under insidious threat. From a quarter that few of us see or fully comprehend.

Here are just a few of the haystacks in the wind.

- The denigration of 'experts' (Gove)
- The promotion of scientific untruths (Trump, climate deniers)
- Deep societal schisms (Brexit, Republicans v Democrats)
- The erosion of civil liberties, eg facial recognition (HK, and now the UK)
- The roll-back of abortion and gay rights (US, Nigeria)
- Massive environmental concerns (plastics, global warming)
- Data mining and lack of privacy (Google, Alexa, & Governments world-wide)

And our own dear SHH - what relevance do we have for (to give just one example from many possible), Greta Thunberg and her young supporters?

In rudderless world it's surely time to relaunch fuddy duddy 'old' humanism, and push it back into the forefront of modern society. Humanism, as revealed by Petrarch, has so much more to contribute than being just the platform for a 'lack of theism'. Otherwise it's back to the Dark Ages. Or to put another way -**curtains** - but just not from Debenhams!



Humanists UK Celebrants

Trained and Accredited by Humanists UK

W = Weddings; N = Namings; F = Funerals

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WISHING YOU ALL HAPPINESS AT THIS SPECIAL SEASON AND IN 2020.